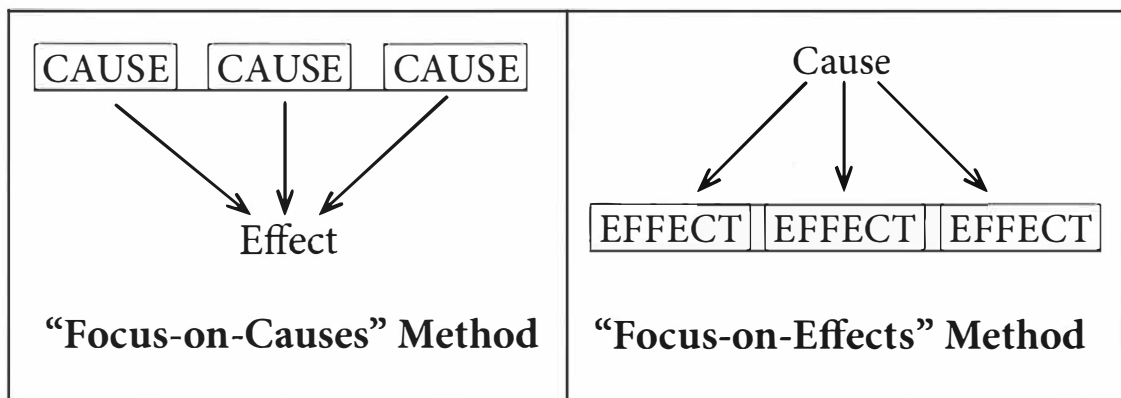


What Is a Cause-Effect Essay?

A **cause-effect essay** shows the reader the relationship between something that happens and its consequences, or between actions and results. For example, if too much commercial fishing is allowed in the North Atlantic Ocean (action), the fish population in some areas may diminish or disappear (result). Cause-effect essays can be informative, analytical, and insightful. In addition to being able to write a cause-effect essay, you need to know about this type of writing because you may want to include a single paragraph discussing a cause, an effect, or both in a longer essay you are writing, such as a persuasive or argumentative piece.

In this unit, you will study two kinds of cause-effect essays. Very simply, in one method, the writer focuses on the causes of something. Just think of how many people, when they are given a piece of information, like to analyze the topic and ask the question *Why?* or *How?* This is called the **focus-on-causes** method. In the second method, the writer emphasizes the effects or results of a cause. People who like to think hypothetically—answering the question *What if?*—focus on the outcome of a particular event or action. These writers often write **focus-on-effects** essays.



Imagine that your instructor gives you the following writing topic: quitting a job. You have the choice of using the focus-on-causes method or the focus-on-effects method.

Focus-on-causes method: You can choose to write an essay on why people quit their jobs and brainstorm possible reasons they may have for doing so, such as distance from the home or lack of benefits. Each paragraph would contain a different cause.

Focus-on-effects method: On the other hand, you may want to emphasize the effects of quitting a job—perhaps detailing the emotional and financial consequences—in your body paragraphs. In this case, each paragraph would address one effect.

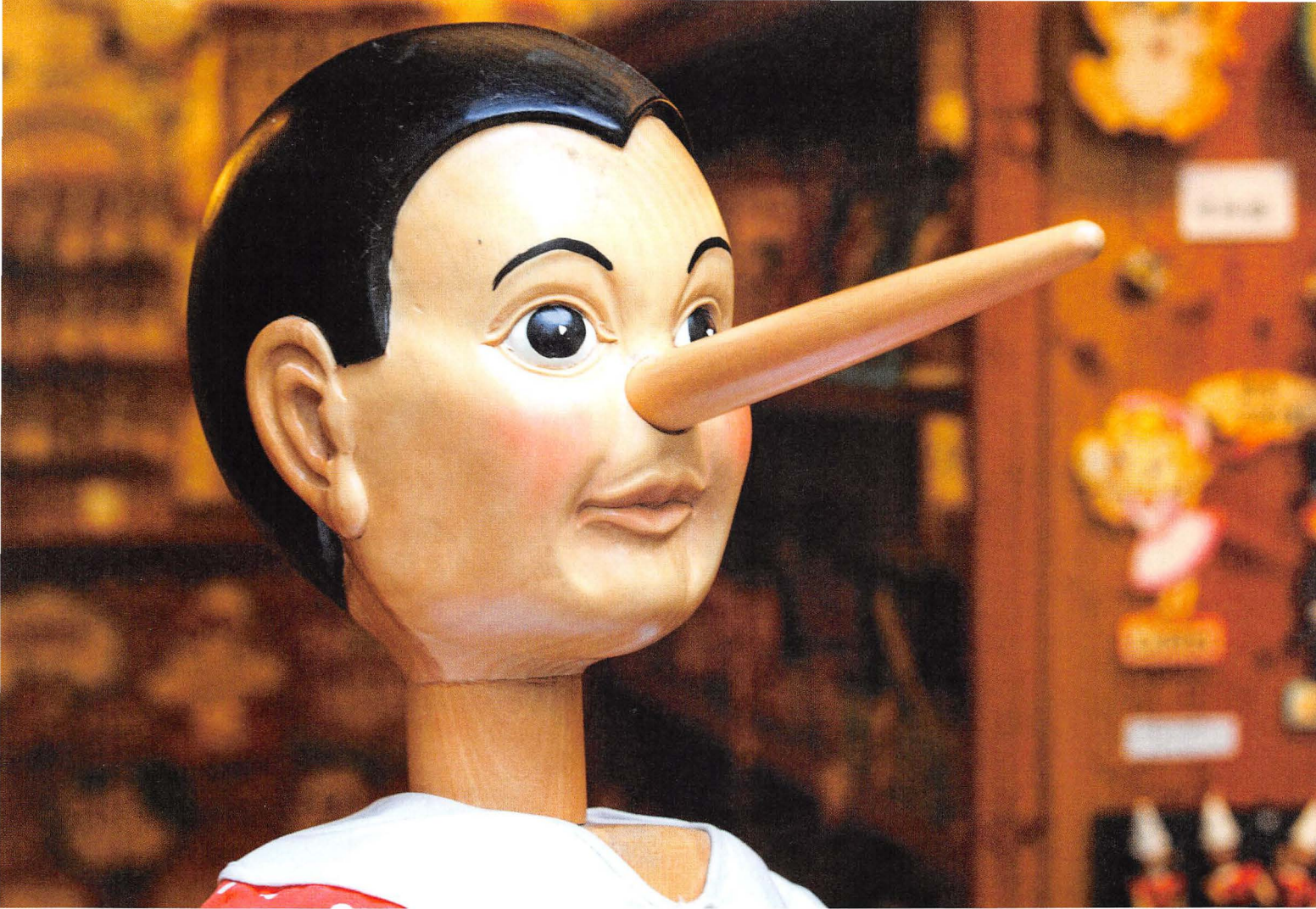
These two cause-effect essay methods answer different questions. Essays that use the focus-on-causes method answer the question, **“Why does something happen?”** Essays that use the focus-on-effects method answer the question, **“What happens when...?”**

ACTIVITY 1 Studying a Cause-Effect Essay

This focus-on-causes essay answers the question, “Why do people lie?” Discuss the Preview Questions with a classmate. Then read the example essay and answer the questions that follow.

Preview Questions

1. Why do you think people lie?
2. Is it ever acceptable to lie? Give examples of acceptable and unacceptable lies.



Essay 15

The Truth Behind Lying

- 1 Most children are taught the virtue of honesty from fairy tales and other stories. The **celebrated** story of Pinocchio, who begins life as a **puppet**, teaches the importance of telling the truth. Every time Pinocchio lies, his nose grows longer and longer. Another story about the boy who “cried wolf” **exemplifies** how lying led to his losing all of his sheep as well as the trust of his fellow villagers. In the United States, young children learn the tale of young George Washington, who finally admits to his father that he cut down a cherry tree. These types of stories show children that “honesty is the best policy.” Still, if this is the case, then why do so many people lie? The fact is that human beings lie for many reasons.
- 2 One reason for lying has to do with minimizing a mistake. While it is true that everyone makes a **blunder** from time to time, some people do not have the courage to admit their errors because they fear blame. For example, students might lie to their teachers about unfinished homework. They might say that they left the work at home when, in fact, they did not do the work at all. These students do not want to seem irresponsible, so they make up an excuse—a lie—to save face.

celebrated: famous, renowned

a puppet: a toy that is moved by strings

to exemplify: represent, typify

a blunder: a careless mistake

- 3 Another reason people lie is to get out of situations that they do not want to be in or cannot manage. For example, if a company decides to have a weekend meeting, one of the managers might not feel like attending. She may call her boss and give this excuse: "I've been fighting off a cold all week, and I truly cannot risk getting the others sick. I'll be sure to get all of the notes on Monday." When individuals do not want to admit the truth and then face the consequences, they use lies to **avoid** difficulties.
- 4 In contrast, some people might tell a "white lie" when they do not want to hurt someone else's feelings. For example, if a good friend shows up with an **unflattering** new haircut, one could be truthful and say, "That haircut looks awful. What were you thinking?!" A more likely scenario is to say, "It's very original! It suits you," and spare the friend's feelings. These types of lies are generally not considered negative or wrong. In fact, many people who have told the truth to loved ones, only to see the negative reaction, wish they *had* told a white lie. Therefore, white lies can be useful in maintaining good relationships.
- 5 A somewhat different reason for lying has to do with self-protection. Parents, particularly those with small children, may teach their children to use this type of "protective" lie in certain circumstances. What should children do if a stranger calls while the parents are out? Many parents teach their children to explain that mom and dad are too busy to come to the phone at that time. In this situation, protective lying can prevent harm or disaster.
- 6 People lie for many reasons, both good and bad. However, before people **resort to** lying in order to cover up mistakes or to avoid unpleasant situations, perhaps the motives for lying should be analyzed. One's lies may one day be exposed and cause severe embarrassment or the loss of people's trust.

to avoid: to keep away from

unflattering:
unattractive, not favorable

to resort to: to do something only because other options have failed

Post-Reading

1. What is the thesis statement? _____

2. What three examples of liars from famous stories does the author give in the introduction?
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
- 3 In Paragraph 4, the idiom *a white lie* is used in the topic sentence but is not defined. Write your own definition of a white lie. _____

4. In Paragraph 5, the author supports the topic sentence by giving an example of a dangerous situation. What example does the author give?

5. Reread the concluding paragraph of “The Truth Behind Lying.” Does the writer offer a suggestion, an opinion, or a prediction? _____ Write the final sentence here.

Building Better Sentences: For further practice, go to Practice 15 on page 202 in Appendix 1.

ACTIVITY 2 Studying a Focus-on-Effects Essay

This focus-on-effects essay discusses some of the effects of the breakup of the Soviet Union. Discuss the Preview Questions with a classmate. Then read the essay and answer the questions that follow.

1. What do you know about the Soviet Union? _____
2. Can you name any countries that were part of the Soviet Union?



The Fall

- 1 For almost 50 years, the Cold War was one of the most talked about issues in international politics. Tensions between Western countries and the former Soviet Union were high, and the world felt the potential danger of a terrible conflict. When the Iron Curtain fell in 1991, many countries **rejoiced**. Independent-minded Soviet Republics got the independence they had wanted, and the communist **ideology** that had been so **prevalent** began to lose ground. Now, more than two decades after the breakup of the Soviet Union, the effects are still being felt.
- 2 One of the most obvious changes in post-communist **Eurasia** has been the **shift** to a market economy. Governments that once had **subsidized** the costs of basic necessities, such as food, transportation, housing, and electricity, are now letting competition and external factors determine the prices of these items. Inflation is high, and many citizens are having a difficult time adjusting to the **fluctuations** in prices based on supply and demand. However, imported goods are now commonplace in local markets, so consumers have more choices in what they buy. While the switch to a market economy is often a painful process, a majority of the citizens of the former Soviet Union are still confident that they will benefit financially from the economic changes.
- 3 Another anticipated effect of the fall of the Iron Curtain is **sovereignty**. The Soviet Union existed as one entity for many years, but many independent republics emerged, including Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Georgia, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan. These republics are currently in the process of shaping their own independent identities. They can focus on rebuilding their own cultures, languages, and priorities. This empowerment increases national pride and uniqueness. The idea of all Soviets being one and the same is certainly no more. Clearly, national identity is at the **forefront** of many people's minds.
- 4 While many former Soviets now feel a sense of national identity, the fall of the Soviet Union has taken away the identity of others. Many different ethnic groups have lived in this part of the world for generations. They were raised as Soviets, spoke Russian as a native language, and were taught to believe that they were citizens of the great superpower. Koreans, Tartars, Uighurs, and other ethnic groups can be found in most of the former Soviet Republics. Now that independence has spread from Eastern Europe to Central Asia, many of these citizens are considered minority groups. Where their ancestors are from does not matter to them as much as their current homeland. They may look Korean or Chinese, but most of them do not speak those languages and have not had ties with these parts of the world for many years. As the newly formed republics try to **reinvigorate** their traditions and values, many of the ethnic minorities tend to feel left out with no place to really call home.
- 5 The fall of the Soviet Union is perhaps one of the most **momentous** events of the last century. Walls fell, markets opened, and people rejoiced in the streets, anticipating a life filled with opportunities and freedom to make their own choices. A system that took so long to build will probably need as much time, if not more, to truly adapt to the free enterprise system that is now the world model.

to rejoice: to celebrate

an ideology: a system of beliefs

prevalent: common, accepted

Eurasia: the area of Europe and Asia

a shift: a change

to subsidize: to finance, support

a fluctuation: a movement or change

sovereignty: self-government, supremacy

the forefront: in the position of most importance, vanguard

to reinvigorate: to revitalize, bring back to life

momentous: important, eventful

Post-Reading

1. What is the writer's main message in this essay?

2. Reread the thesis statement of "The Fall." Is the thesis stated or implied?

3. a. In Paragraph 2, the writer explains that one effect of the Soviet breakup is the new market economy. What examples does the writer give to show that countries are now in a market economy?

b. In Paragraph 4, the author writes about ethnic minorities and their problems. Which minorities are specifically mentioned, and what problems are they having?

4. In Paragraph 2, find a word that has approximately the same meaning as the word *shift* and write it here. _____

5. Find the boldfaced vocabulary word in the final paragraph of this essay. Write a synonym of that word here. _____

Building Better Sentences: For further practice, go to Practice 16 on page 202 in Appendix 1.

Developing a Cause-Effect Essay

In this next section, you will work on cause-effect essays as you make an outline, write supporting information, study connectors, and choose a topic. Practicing these skills will help you write an effective cause-effect essay.

ACTIVITY 3 Outlining Practice

Complete the following two outlines with a partner. The first one outlines the causes of bullying behavior (focus-on-causes method), and the second one outlines the effects of bullying on the young people who are being bullied (focus-on-effects method). Use your imagination, knowledge of the topic, and understanding of essay organization. Be sure to pay attention to the thesis statements and use them to help you complete the outlines.

Focus-on-Causes Outline

Topic: The causes of bullying behavior

I. Introduction (Paragraph 1)

A. Hook: _____

B. Thesis statement: Bullying behavior can occur for many reasons, some of which are _____

II. Body

A. Paragraph 2 (Cause 1) topic sentence: Teens often begin bullying because they want to control those who are weaker than they are.

- SUPPORT
1. Bullying gives young people an identity—they become well-known in school.
 2. Bullying makes them feel powerful.
 3. _____

B. Paragraph 3 (Cause 2) topic sentence: _____

- SUPPORT
1. In many families, both parents work outside the home.
 2. Parents often do not have time to pay attention to their children’s needs.
 3. Parents may not be aware that their children are exhibiting aggressive behavior both inside and outside the home.

C. Paragraph 4 (Cause 3) topic sentence: _____

- SUPPORT
1. They use violence as a way of identifying themselves.
 2. They may have emotional problems.
 3. Being known for bad behavior is better than not being known at all.

III. Conclusion (Paragraph 5) (restated thesis): _____

The best way to stop young people from bullying and abusing their peers is to educate the public—including teachers, parents, and other children—that bullying is an absolutely unacceptable behavior. Only then will there be a decrease in the number of bullying incidents in school.



Focus-on-Effects Outline

Topic: The effects of bullying on the victim

I. Introduction (Paragraph 1)

A. Hook: _____

B. Thesis statement: When young people bully others, the effects felt by the weaker student can lead to serious, even deadly, consequences.

II. Body

A. Paragraph 2 (Effect 1) topic sentence: Students who are bullied tend to withdraw from society.

- SUPPORT**
1. They often stop communicating with parents and friends.
 2. They want to hide this embarrassing situation, which can lead to lying.
 3. _____

B. Paragraph 3 (Effect 2) topic sentence: _____

SUPPORT

1. Students lose self-esteem and start questioning their own personalities, thinking that maybe they deserve this bad treatment.
2. They may start focusing only on the bully.
3. Their outlook on life may become darker and darker as the bullying continues.

C. Paragraph 4 (Effect 3) topic sentence: If teens become damaged by the bullying, they may do almost anything to get out of the situation.

SUPPORT

1. They may try to escape from their painful reality by engaging in dangerous activities.
2. They might think about a plan of revenge.
3. _____

III. Conclusion (Paragraph 5) (restated thesis): _____

When young people are victims of bullies, there is a strong chance that they will suffer many negative consequences, not only from the bullies themselves but also as they begin to separate from society. For so many years, bullying was considered a normal part of growing up. However, with the increase of teen anguish due to bullying and the millions of dollars spent on long-term therapy, one has to wonder if bullying should be considered a “normal” activity. In order to ensure a stable and healthy society, individuals need to take a harder look at this negative behavior that hurts not only the bullied child and the bully, but the family and society as a whole.

ACTIVITY 4 Supporting Information

The cause-effect essay on the next page is missing the supporting information. As you read the essay, work with a partner to write supporting sentences for each paragraph. If you need more space, use a separate piece of paper. After you finish, compare your supporting information with that of other students.



Television at Its Worst

1 Mr. Stevenson has just come home from a terribly tiring day at work. The first thing he does, after taking off his tie and shoes, is plop down on the couch and turn on the television. Does this sound like a normal routine? It should, because Mr. Stevenson's actions are repeated by millions around the world. People use television to relax and to forget about their daily troubles. However, what started out decades ago as an exciting, new type of family entertainment is currently being blamed for serious problems, especially in children. Many researchers now claim that too much television is not good for kids. They have a point; watching too much TV often does have negative effects on children and adolescents.

2 One negative effect of TV on kids is laziness. _____

3 Another problem with TV watching and kids is that children may have difficulty distinguishing between what is real and what is not. _____

4 Finally, television may lead children to _____

5 Television has changed over the years to include more and more programs that are inappropriate for children. For TV to once again play a more positive role in children's lives, something must be done. Society cannot just continue to wonder why children are behaving poorly. It is time to change TV viewing behavior.